

Testimony Provided by:

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Good afternoon, thank you Chairman Somerville for the opportunity to address the committee today regarding the very important issue of critical shortage. My name is Paul Salah. I am the Associate Superintendent of Educational Services for Wayne County Regional Education Service Agency. I am here to testify in support of House Bill 4059.

I appreciate the Committee on Financial Liability Reform's willingness to revisit and offer the needed changes articulated in House Bill 4059. Specifically, I appreciate, the removal of the July 1, 2014 sunset language that has been disruptive to the critical shortage process and in turn schools and ISDs across the state.

Strategies, research, best practice, and accountability drive the current educational environment. As educators we understand what activities have the greatest impact upon teaching and learning. Further, we have the research, the data points and the understanding of the best way with which to support students from various backgrounds and income levels. Strategies, research and best practice however, in the absence of qualified

individuals to carry out the work creates a nearly impossible situation. Several specific examples come to mind.

For example, Wayne RESA recently spent three (3) days interviewing sixteen (16) perspective candidates to fulfill the responsibilities required under the Regional Assistance Grant as well as our general school improvement responsibilities. We need four (4) to six (6) full time equivalent positions in addition to the twelve (12) we already have in place to fulfill these work responsibilities for our 32 school districts and 110 public school academies. After three days of interviews we were able to find one (1) person that possessed the necessary skills, background, experience and knowledge. The fact of the matter is that educators that have just graduated from college or even those with 3 to 5 years of experience do not normally possess the necessary skills to fill high need areas.

We need highly trained, experienced individuals that understand multiple aspects of leadership, school culture, curriculum and instruction and accountability systems. We need individuals that have respect in the field and have, to a certain extent lived the work and been successful supporting schools from various backgrounds.

In addition to this example local districts struggle in various high demand areas as well. For example Career Technical Education and Adult Education, World Language and in some

instances math and science instructors, to name a few. Like other professions, education needs its retirees to model professional learning for teachers, principals, and central office leaders.

Unfortunately, despite the time, energy and efforts expended I recognize that every day children go without the best we can do as a State. The greatest need is found within our poorest schools where the achievement gap is clearly correlated with poverty and teacher transience. We need all of our resources, including our retired experts to help fill in voids where necessary and appropriate. I have often heard the term “double dipping” as a rationale for prohibiting retirees to work in our neediest environments. Retirees however do not double draw upon MPSERS.

House Bill 4059 will help us as we move forward but I would ask the legislature to also consider greater flexibility as it relates to the 1/3 cap. The education community can learn a great deal from some of our highly skilled retirees. As with other professions we need their skills to help us provide the most important social right of our society, the education of our children.

Thank you, for your time and consideration.

